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# Child-Feeding Work in Germany

Under the American Friends' Service Committee

Coöperating with the American Relief Administration and the European  
Children's Fund, Herbert C. Hoover, Chairman

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IT will be remembered that in the months following the Armistice many movements were started in the United States for the relief of the belligerent countries of Europe. Those which secured precedence were concerned with the rehabilitation of the countries which had served as the battlefields of the great war or those which for other reasons impressed their need on their friends in America. Germany was not, at first, supposed to be in need of assistance and the continued delay in signing a Treaty of Peace between the Central Powers and the Allies did not aid in the dissemination of accurate information in the United States concerning the conditions under which Germans were and are living. There was, on this account, no widespread recognition of the need of any action—official, commercial, or philanthropic—whose purpose would be to ameliorate some part of the distress which a large part of the German population is now enduring. Information as to the real conditions in Germany was astoundingly scarce, in spite of the fact that the blockade, which was maintained after the Armistice, was rendering more severe the shortage of foodstuffs which at the time of the Armistice was already acute.

American citizens of German birth or parentage were soon aware, however, that their relatives and friends in Germany were facing conditions which were, by contrast with the standards of

prewar Germany, almost unbelievable. Such Americans promptly began, and have continued, to send gifts of food to individuals in Germany, but such gifts have not served effectively to mitigate the general shortage of food which stands out as the most distressing feature of the conditions under which the people of Germany—at least, those in the cities—are living. What these conditions are is now a matter of more or less common report, resulting as they do from a shortage or absence of certain important foodstuffs and raw materials, a diminution of transportation facilities and export markets and almost disrupting fluctuations in the rate of exchange. No one, nor in fact the sum total of all, of these debit items has produced in Germany the distress which almost overcame and is still oppressing some of her neighbors to the East; but one result of the food-shortage aroused, at last, the sympathy of those in the United States who knew of it. This was the condition of the German children.

In the summer of 1919 many committees in America were planning to purchase foodstuffs and to start relief operations in Germany. The European Children's Fund, with Herbert Hoover as its chairman, was also well-informed as to the need of adding Germany to its list of operations, but was prevented from this action by the continuance of a "state of war" between the United States and Germany.

In brief there was an apparently ample fund of information and purpose to assure the undertaking of child-feeding operations in Germany on a fairly large scale.

Much of the information, both as to needs and as to methods, was in the possession of Herbert Hoover; and, at his request, the various organizations which were turning their efforts toward child-relief decided to limit their activities to the collection of funds. These funds, largely increased by transfers from the European Children's Fund, were to be administered by one organization which would have full charge of all operations in Germany which the money so contributed made possible, and would conduct them according to the standardized methods of the European Children's Fund. At Mr. Hoover's request the American Friends' Service Committee of Philadelphia was chosen as this operating organization.

The American Friends' Service Committee accepted the responsibility so offered, particularly as its important work in France was drawing to a close and it expected to have personnel and equipment available for the proposed work in Germany. On December 11, 1919 it dispatched a party of fifteen—eleven men and four women—to Germany, and promptly set about raising money not only for the expenses of this party and their "control" work but also for the support of the general work, *i.e.*, for the purchase of food. It secured these contributions to some extent from the same groups which had financed the work in France—the Friends (or Quakers) and the Mennonites. Although the Service Committee undertook to collect general contributions for food because food was needed and partly because the committee was unwilling to operate in Germany with money obtained entirely without

effort on its part, later developments showed that the funds collected directly by it had an important part in determining the spirit with which the work was conducted by the German committees.

The German Local Committees were an essential part of the organization for conducting the work of child-feeding in Germany. The Service Committee used for this purpose the entire plan of action of the European Children's Fund, which is, in brief, that (1) local committees shall arrange for the physical examination of all children who are fed, and (2) shall operate kitchens and feeding-centers for the preparation and distribution of the meals; and, further, that the local committees shall (3) contribute foodstuffs locally available and shall meet (4) all expenses connected with the transportation within Germany of the American foodstuffs and (5) all expenses connected with the cooking and distribution of the meals, and (6) the local committees may collect a small fee from each child in order to defray, in part, their expenses.

The German unit of the Service Committee arrived in Berlin about January 1, 1920, and its first duty was to establish connections with the German Central Government which would facilitate the development of the work as it was extended through the cities of Germany. These connections were readily and effectively established by obtaining membership in the "German Central Committee for Foreign Relief" (*Deutscher Zentral Ausschuss für Auslandhilfe*) which is a semi-official committee of recent growth. Its Chairman, Geheimrat Dr. Bose, represents the Ministry; its members are practically all of the important relief organizations operating in Germany, and its purposes are to record the needs of the various districts of Germany and the extent of the relief-

work conducted to meet these needs and to allocate supplies as available to supplement the existing relief-work in those districts in which it is notably insufficient. As may be supposed, the work of this Central Committee is far from adequate to meet the needs of all Germany, but it has done great good by equalizing the distribution of supplies or, better, by directing them in the direction of the greatest need and by supplying information as to Germany's needs which guide and stimulate the contribution of supplies by her friendlier neighbors.

Through the DZA, as the *Deutscher Zentral Ausschuss* may be called, the Service Committee arranged for the transportation of the American foodstuffs from Hamburg to such cities as undertook child-feeding operations and for the storage and insurance of the foodstuffs in Hamburg prior to their shipment to the interior. The DZA also furnished data on which could be based the decision as to what cities were most in need of child-feeding and supplied introductions to organizations and individuals in such cities whose services would be available for the organization of child-feeding operations.

In parallel with these negotiations with the DZA, the work of securing warehousing and forwarding facilities in Hamburg and of organizing for child-feeding in Hamburg and Berlin, was undertaken. As has been intimated, the foodstuffs which were purchased in the United States were shipped to Hamburg; and conditions in this city resulting from the blockade and ultimate loss of all important German shipping were so severe as to make it proper to begin child-feeding there as promptly as possible. On the basis of need Leipzig and Dresden were selected as the remaining points for the first operations. And, practi-

cally speaking, child-feeding operations on a small scale were begun simultaneously in these four cities.

The actual date of commencement of feeding was determined by the arrival of foodstuffs; and the first shipment was received in Hamburg on February 13, 1920. The first shipment did not contain a full assortment of foodstuffs and it was necessary to wait for the arrival of two more boats in order to obtain a more complete stock. Even so it was necessary to borrow five hundred tons of flour from the American Relief Administration warehouses in order to complete the list of supplies.

Most of the meals actually served in Germany were prepared according to the following schedule which gives the amount of foodstuffs available per child per week:

		<i>Grams per child per week</i>
Lard.....	6.0	64.9
Cocoa.....	2.5	27.2
Sugar.....	7.5	81.0
Condensed milk (sweetened)	10.5	113.3
Evaporated milk (unsweetened).....	10.5	113.3
Rice.....	9.0	97.3
Flour.....	39.0	421.0
Peas and/or beans.....	15.0	161.9
	100.0	1,079.9

The meals served during March and April contained somewhat less lard, cocoa, sugar and milk, but more flour. The above schedule, and the preliminary one also, provided meals of 667 calories each. Different meals were served on each of the six days of the week, but the weekly menu was used unchanged for at least a month.

The undernourished condition of the children of Germany is due not to lack of "food" but to lack of certain kinds of food of which the first seven items of the above list are representative. The value of the meals served

cannot, therefore, be measured solely by their value in calories, even though, on this basis, they supplied one-third of the nourishment needed by a school-child. The quality of the foodstuffs was such as to supply those elements which had been partially or nearly wholly removed from the dietary of the average child; and the gains in health and strength, which children showed as the result of eight weeks of feeding, were due as much, perhaps, to the quality as to the quantity of the food supplied.

Each child admitted to the feeding-centers received one meal on each weekday. From the nature of the foodstuffs, this meal consisted, in general, of bread (or *Zwieback*) and soup. School children, between the ages of six and fourteen years, formed the largest group in the feeding-centers; but about 10 per cent of the total number of individuals fed were small children under six years of age and about 10 per cent were nursing or expectant mothers. The basis for admission to feeding was the same for all of these groups—the physical condition of the individual members: and no individual was admitted to feeding except on the certificate of a competent physician that the individual was “very undernourished” or was afflicted with one of the diseases of which undernourishment is a prime cause, such as tuberculosis, rachitis, etc.

The various essential points of the so-called “Hoover program” of child-feeding, which are mentioned above, deserve specific comment:

1. The formation of local committees to take charge of the work of child-feeding in the different cities proved an easy task. The organizing ability of the Germans, while not apparently so great as war-time “propaganda” would lead one to believe, is nevertheless considerable. The con-

stitution of these committees varied with the locality. Some committees were semi-official in nature, being composed of municipal officials. Others were composed of individuals from private life who were fitted by experience in business or philanthropy to undertake such a work. Some were conservative, others radical and others “mixed.” Some were without denominational bias while in others, in order to insure satisfactory results, it was necessary to have two or three denominations represented. In all cases, the Service Committee reserved the right to terminate its relations with the committee as at first constituted if its work proved unsatisfactory; although, as a matter of fact, such drastic action has not been necessary. Each local committee has general charge of the work in its city and furnishes adequate reports on standard forms to the Service Committee from which are determined the extent and efficiency of its work. In particular, the local committee employs necessary assistants and secures such volunteer help as may be available.

2. The physical examinations of the children and mothers are conducted according to standards formulated by a committee composed of specialists. The term “very undernourished” is defined and the local physicians, working under the local committees, apply the standards so determined with considerable accuracy. The adoption and application of such standards proved a great surprise to many Germans who had expected a somewhat indiscriminate distribution of food; and it proved also, to many doctors, a great stimulus to work for child-welfare because it gave to them their first exact statistics as to the extent of undernourishment among German children. In explanation of the last statement it must be made

clear that for various reasons the municipal health departments, the hospitals and the private physicians are not now able to cope with the problems of ill health or subnormal health which Germany now faces, and they are specializing on curative rather than preventative work. Under such conditions, not all of them are fully aware of the extent of curative work needed.

3. Most German cities have kitchens which are more or less adequate for the work of child-feeding. Many such kitchens date from before the war but probably most of them were equipped when the war-time food shortage made it necessary to introduce central feeding on a large scale. Under the present somewhat disorganized condition of Germany, many of these kitchens are not needed for other purposes and have been turned over by the municipalities for the use of the local committees in charge of child-feeding.

Many cities, however, have, of necessity, equipped special kitchens for the work and have used much make-shift material. Portable field-kitchens are sometimes so utilized.

The feeding centers are, in general, in the schools and are in charge of teachers assigned to the work or of volunteers. Those in charge admit only the proper children and serve them with the meals which are brought in large containers from the kitchens.

4. A certain amount of foodstuffs are available in Germany which may be added to those contributed from America in order to make the meals more wholesome or appetizing. Green vegetables, potatoes, onions, bouillon cubes, etc., have been supplied by the local committees. During next winter, the German Government will supply all flour needed, thereby assuming about one-third of the cost of the foodstuffs supplied and also giving its

approval of the methods adopted by the Service Committee.

5. As has been noted above, the *Deutscher Zentral Ausschuss* has arranged to meet all expenses connected with the storage of American foodstuffs in Hamburg and their transportation to the different cities. This committee, however, recovers the cost of these services from the respective local committees; and, on this account, the German Government bore but little of the expense of the child-feeding operations prior to its decision to contribute flour for the winter's campaign. This rather surprising fact is in part due to the relations which, in Germany, obtain between the Central Government and the various state and municipal governments and which had appeared to be so rigid that it was constitutionally impossible for the Central Government to incur expenses which were for the benefit of only a part of the nation's population. That this regulation has been circumvented is due to the importance of the child-feeding operations in restoring, in some measure, the lost health of the children and the need for extending it as far as possible, particularly in view of the limited support which these operations have received from the United States. The present program for next winter's work should be greatly expanded if it is adequately to meet the need.

6. The expense of cooking and serving the meals, which is met by the local committees, is very considerable in spite of the large amount of volunteer help that is generally available. The cost, in Essen, of supplying 1,352,510 meals was 476,000 marks, or 35.2 pfennigs per meal. The food served was worth approximately 5 cents or, at a rate of .50 marks to \$1, the sum of 2.50 marks.

7. The local committees collect 20 pfennigs per meal from all children

except those of destitute families and the money so received is used to defray part of the local expense of operation. The Service Committee receives no aid from any German source to meet its expenses incurred in connection with its "control" work, except that its offices and their equipment are supplied free and its members travel free when on committee business.

The child-feeding operations in Germany have been very important. Foodstuffs supplied to July 1, 1920, amounted to approximately \$3,000,000 in value, or 60,000,000 meals. The maximum number of children (and mothers) in attendance was 632,000 per day. No reliable statistics can yet be given to show the improvement in health of the children although a general increase in weight is reported. An indeterminate increase in vitality is also evidenced by the better spirits and increased activity of the children and by the deep gratitude expressed by teachers and parents for the visible improvement in the children under their care.

The democratic nature of the operations has been satisfactory. As has been mentioned, the committees frequently typify the somewhat chaotic political condition of Germany and the various groups of volunteers, women though they be, represent discrepant political beliefs. Denominational dif-

ferences also appear. In spite of these potential causes of dissention and because of the importance of working for the children, the feeding operations have moved smoothly and effectively.

The political significance of the feeding operations has been noteworthy. The fact that the contributions secured by the Service Committee have totalled as much as those collected by the committees composed of those who have a special interest in Germany and, also, the fact that the funds allocated to these operations by the European Children's Fund were more than half of the total sum spent for foodstuffs, were sufficient evidence to prove that the motive force behind the operations was humanitarian rather than "pro-German." An important part of the American people, in spite of much individual testimony to the contrary, is willing to recognize the obligations of a common humanity and to believe that the basis for workable international relations cannot be laid by force alone but must include the element of coöperation against the forces of nature which today are so nearly beyond the control of the white race in Europe.

The child-feeding operations in Germany will be continued during the winter of 1920-21 on a scale determined by the amount of funds available.